

# European Wholesale Markets Leading the Way in Food Donation Initiatives

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## ITALY: "Frutta che Frutta Non Spreca" (Fruit that Doesn't Waste Fruit)- Italian Wholesale Markets Leading the Way in Food Donation Efforts

We are thrilled to showcase the remarkable efforts of Italian Wholesale Markets in food donation through the inspiring The "Frutta che Frutta Non Spreca" project. This nationwide initiative aligns perfectly with the U.N. 2030 Agenda's S.D.G. (Sustainable Development Goals) 2 'Zero Hunger', aiming to reduce food waste and provide nutritious meals to those in need.

Italian Wholesale Markets, members of Italmercati, have long been aware of food waste and are actively implementing good practices to address it. In 2021 alone, the Network Markets collected over 7,000 tonnes of unsold products, valued at approximately 2.5 million euros. Thanks to the collaboration of 160 non-profit organizations, these recovered products directly benefit thousands of people daily, ensuring a meal for those who need it most.

The foundations of the "Frutta che Frutta" project lie at the Centro Agroalimentare Roma (C.A.R.). The critical element is the transformation and packaging laboratory managed by a non-profit organization, which plays a pivotal role in the process. Edible products no longer suitable for sale are recovered at the C.A.R. and transformed into finished goods such as canned goods, sauces, jams, and juices. These items are then included in the solidarity circuit, destined to support to those in need. The main objectives of the project are ambitious and innovative:

- Efficiently recover surplus products.
- Extend the shelf-life of surplus items, maximizing their usability.
- Promote the recovery of both fresh and processed products for social purposes.

- Experiment with new transformation models, engaging the third sector.
- Enhance the skills of the third sector in food transformation and distribution.

In 2020, amid the challenges of the pandemic, over 8,000 tons of products were collected solely at the Rome AgriFood Centre (C.A.R.), earning its operators the prestigious "Food Heroes 2020" award from the United Nations.

The positive impact of recovering unsold products extends far beyond reducing food waste. Through these efforts, Italian Wholesale Markets contribute significantly to the environment, society, and economy. Notable benefits include:

- Saving on waste disposal, equivalent to about 14,700 skips avoided.
- They are preserving over 49 million square meters of land, enough to build approximately 7,000 football pitches.
- They are conserving water resources, with over 7.6 million cubic meters of savings, equivalent to over 2,300 Olympic-size swimming pools.
- They are reducing CO2 production by about 8 million kg, equivalent to the emissions of about 64,000 cars travelling from Milan to Naples.

These remarkable achievements underscore the dedication and impact of Italian Wholesale Markets in addressing food waste and supporting vulnerable communities.

## GREECE: Thessaloniki Central Market's "Social Plate": A Pioneering Food Donation Project Making a Difference

We cannot talk about food donation without mentioning the exceptional efforts of Thessaloniki Central Market SA (CMT) through their inspiring project, "Social Plate." This nationwide initiative significantly impacts by combatting food waste, supporting vulnerable communities, and promoting sustainable practices.

At the core of the "Social Plate" project are activities that reduce food waste and address pressing social issues. By collecting non-marketable fruits and vegetables from wholesale traders' premises within CMT daily, the project ensures that surplus and near-degradation produce finds its way to regional institutions and collectives supporting vulnerable groups. After careful sorting, the edible items are transformed into nutritious meals, alleviating food insecurity and reducing poverty and social exclusion.

The vision for "Social Plate" was developed by CMT SA, reflecting their commitment to the environment and the well-being of their community. Funded initially by the INTERREG V-A Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 program, the project established the "Social Food Aid Civic Non-Profit Company" with the distinctive title "Social Plate" in April 2018. Since November 2021, the project has also been a part of the LIFE-IP CEI-Greece project "Implementation of the Circular Economy in Greece," further expanding its positive impact.

The "Social Plate" initiative extends its positive effects beyond the beneficiaries it serves. Notably, through participation in subsidized unemployment reduction schemes, it maintains low-expertise job positions for long-term unemployed individuals, primarily older adults nearing retirement. This commitment to social welfare goes hand in hand with their mission to reduce food waste and protect the environment.

The collaboration and partnerships forged by "Social Plate" with over 80 stakeholders, including Social Grocery Stores, Non-Governmental Organizations, Church Soup Kitchens, and Collectives, have been instrumental in ensuring fresh and nutritious food reaches those in need. The estimated 8,000 to 10,000 beneficiaries benefit from this crucial support, including people without housing, the unemployed, refugees, and others facing hardships.

Moreover, "Social Plate" is a role model for sustainable practices. With over 1,210 tons of fruits and vegetables collected and 884 tons redistributed, the project aligns with the principles of a circular economy. By diverting

organic residues for composting, it significantly reduces landfill waste and promotes responsible consumption and production.

"Social Plate" also finds inspiration in UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. The project's impact aligns closely with targets 12.3 and 12.5, aiming to reduce food waste and waste generation through prevention, recycling, and reuse.

Thessaloniki Central Market SA's "Social Plate" sets a remarkable example for Greek Wholesale Markets and the global community, proving that collective efforts can make a tangible difference in addressing food waste, supporting vulnerable populations, and fostering a sustainable future.

## FRANCE : French Wholesale Markets Spearhead Food Donation Initiatives, Making a Difference in the Fight Against Food Waste

French wholesale markets have been at the forefront of tackling food waste and supporting vulnerable communities through their transformative food donation initiatives. By signing charters and fostering strong partnerships, these markets promote sustainable, circular, and socially responsible models that benefit all stakeholders in the food production, distribution, and solidarity sectors.

### FRANCE, Marseille: Les Marmites Solidaires: A Testament of Generosity and Solidarity

An excellent example is an initiative called "Les Marmites Solidaires" (The Solidarity Pots). This visionary project aims to redefine the food donation landscape by embracing values of solidarity, sustainability, and social responsibility. By signing the charter, this market commits to the principles and vision of "Les Marmites Solidaires," striving to combat food waste and food insecurity while fostering local and circular economies.

The "Les Marmites Solidaires" initiative promotes a local and circular social and solidarity-based economy that welcomes all production, distribution, and food solidarity players.

One of the driving forces behind the creation of "Les Marmites Solidaires" is the recognition that a significant amount of food is lost before reaching consumers while it remains perfectly consumable. This project unites various stakeholders, including producers (wholesalers and market farmers), food distributors (National Interest Market), and solidarity actors (transformation workshops and local food banks), in a collective effort to combat both food waste and food insecurity.

"Les Marmites Solidaires" focuses on reducing waste and fostering social inclusion through employment opportunities. The project emphasizes engaging individuals seeking professional reintegration, providing them with training and meaningful employment in the transformation workshops. As active players in the food supply chain and solidarity sectors, participants in this initiative advocate for promoting healthy eating through quality produce from short circuits. By supporting "Les Marmites Solidaires," they enable vulnerable individuals to access fresh fruits and vegetables, empowering them to make healthier choices for their well-being.

This transformative initiative is built upon principles of fraternity and generosity. By joining "Les Marmites Solidaires," participants ensure that individuals facing food insecurity can access balanced meals, effectively working against exclusion and hunger.

As part of this groundbreaking initiative, the Banque Alimentaire des Bouches-du-Rhône (Food Bank of Bouches-du-Rhône) and the Marché Marseille Méditerranée (Marseille Mediterranean Wholesale Market) signed the charter, underscoring their commitment to responsible and sustainable practices. The Association Fruits et Légumes Solidarité (Fruits and Vegetables Solidarity Association) invested in establishing a dedicated food transformation workshop in Marseille, funded primarily by the Conseil Départemental (Departmental Council).

This innovative workshop collects and processes surplus fruits and vegetables from the Marseille Mediterranean Market and other generous donations, amounting to nearly 3,000 tonnes of fresh produce annually. By transforming these otherwise wasted products into soups, juices, jams, and other items, "Les Marmites

Solidaires" achieves multiple goals, such as reducing waste, fostering employment, combating poverty, and promoting local and circular social and solidarity-based economies.

## FRANCE, Rungis: La Cabane à Don: Paving the Way for Streamlined Food Donations

In the bustling heart of the Rungis Market, where food is bought, sold, and distributed on a monumental scale, a profound commitment to solidarity and combating food waste is taking centre stage. In June 2023, a survey conducted by SEMMARIS revealed a heartwarming tale of generosity amid the complex context of 2022, characterized by inflation, geopolitical tensions and environmental challenges such as the Ukrainian war and drought.

SEMMARIS "Société d'Économie Mixte d'Aménagement et de Gestion du Marché d'Intérêt National de Rungis." It is a French public-private mixed economy company responsible for the development and management of the Rungis International Market.

The 44 associations dedicated to food donation operating within the Rungis Market have received remarkable benevolence from the wholesalers. Throughout 2022, a staggering 1,571 tons of food products were donated to these associations, serving as a testament to the altruism of the wholesalers. These generous contributions express their understanding of the crucial battle against food waste and a strong demonstration of solidarity towards the most vulnerable in society.

As part of its commitment to solidarity, SEMMARIS has been providing free toll cards to eligible food donation associations, amounting to over **€16,100** in 2022. The impact of these collective efforts has been immense, resulting in approximately 3,107,000 meals being redistributed to those in need across the Île-de-France region. These meals have been distributed through various channels, including food parcels, prepared meals, and solidary grocery networks.

But the spirit of generosity doesn't stop there. Rungis' dedication to the cause extends beyond the confines of the market itself. Collaborating with ANDES, a pioneering association, the ambitious "La Cabane" project was initiated to revolutionize food donation logistics. Designed to facilitate the direct donation of food products from wholesalers, "La Cabane" serves as a communication platform, elevating the visibility of ANDES among the wholesalers and fostering more donations for people in need.

The project has faced various challenges, yet it remains resolute in its mission to increase the number of food donations for the aid network. By providing an automated solution within a wholesale pavilion, this initiative seeks to redirect biowaste generated by wholesalers, reducing waste and making significant strides in the fight against food waste.

Amidst the hurdles and triumphs of this endeavor, "La Cabane" has already achieved notable success. However, economic fluctuations and rising product prices presented obstacles that could not deter the collective determination to persevere. New campaigns for awareness, promotions, and sensitization among wholesalers are underway, with an optimistic outlook for increased donations, particularly in light of warmer weather and the need to address the fragility of perishable products.

The significance of Rungis' commitment to solidarity and waste reduction cannot be overstated, especially in times of crisis. During the initial waves of the global pandemic, the wholesalers rose to the occasion, making substantial contributions that reached not only the Potager de Marianne but also numerous citizen-led initiatives. Demonstrating their unwavering support, wholesalers continued to step forward, providing aid to students severely affected by the pandemic. Furthermore, Rungis Market showcased its humanitarian spirit by lending a helping hand to the people of Ukraine during a tumultuous period, facilitating the distribution of essential supplies on an extraordinary scale.

Rungis Market and its partners remain steadfast in pursuing their noble goals. With groundbreaking innovations such as "La Cabane" and a dedicated focus on social and environmental responsibility, they exemplify how collaborative efforts and a spirit of solidarity can create lasting positive change within their domain and beyond.



As they look to the future, the determination to continue this transformative journey is evident, with plans to expand and improve these initiatives in the coming months.

Rungis Market's commitment to food donation and waste reduction sets a powerful example for others. With a united front against food waste and a resolute dedication to supporting the most vulnerable, Rungis is shaping a brighter, more sustainable future for all.

French wholesale markets, led by the inspiring initiative "Les Marmites Solidaires" and "La Cabane à Don" are revolutionizing food donation efforts. Their dedication to solidarity, sustainability, and social responsibility is creating a more equitable and efficient food supply chain. By collaborating with transformation workshops and local food banks, these markets are actively fighting food waste and addressing food insecurity, positively impacting vulnerable communities and setting an example for other regions to follow.

### **SPAIN: Spanish Wholesale Markets Spearhead Food Donation Initiatives, Making a Difference in the Fight Against Food Waste**

Food donation projects in Spanish wholesale markets have taken centre stage in the battle against hunger and food waste. These initiatives, implemented by Mercamadrid and Mercabarna, are exemplary models of how wholesale markets can collaborate with food banks and charitable organizations to ensure surplus food reaches those in need.

#### **SPAIN, Mercamadrid – Food Donation Project:**

Mercamadrid, in collaboration with El Banco de Alimentos de Madrid (The Food Bank of Madrid) since 1996, has been at the forefront of the fight against food waste. The project aims to minimize food waste while promoting responsible production and consumption. This strategic partnership allows surplus and defective food items from wholesale companies to be redirected to El Banco de Alimentos de Madrid's operations centre in Mercamadrid.

The operations centre at Mercamadrid spans six warehouses, covering 720 m<sup>2</sup> of space. The process includes collection, quality control, sorting, selection, repackaging, storage, and distribution. Mercamadrid employs a computer system to efficiently distribute food donations to charitable organizations based on their needs and requirements.

The success of this food donation project is attributed to the collaborative efforts of various associations, including wholesale and retail businesses of Mercamadrid's donor companies and other relevant organizations such as the Association of Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Businesses of Madrid (Asomafрут) and the Association of Meat Industries of Madrid (AIE).

In 2021 alone, the Mercamadrid operations centre distributed an impressive 2,282,000 kg of food to 150 charities, serving 40,000 people in poverty or at risk of social exclusion in the Community of Madrid. The project has not only reduced food waste. Still, it has also significantly improved the quality of food distributed to those in need.

#### **SPAIN, Mercabarna – The Foodback Project:**

Mercabarna, in partnership with various charitable organizations, has been leading the way in reducing food waste through its Foodback Project since 2022. The project involves a central warehouse at Mercabarna that serves as a collection, selection, and distribution centre for excess fresh produce donated by companies within the wholesale market.

The Foodback Project encourages market users to bring non-usable organic matter to intelligent containers within their pavilions. The excess organic produce deemed usable goes to the Foodback Center, where it is further sorted and distributed to collaborating social entities.



Partners and Positive Impacts: The Foodback Project works with esteemed partners such as the Banco de los Alimentos, Cruz Roja, Cáritas, and Programa Alimenta Barcelona. The collaboration between these organizations ensures that surplus food reaches vulnerable populations most efficiently and effectively.

The dedication and commitment of Spanish wholesale markets, represented by Mercamadrid and Mercabarna, in combating food waste and hunger are commendable. These food donation projects serve as inspiring examples of how strategic collaborations between wholesale markets and food banks can significantly impact the lives of thousands in need while promoting responsible and sustainable food practices. The positive outcomes achieved by these initiatives are a testament to the potential for global wholesale markets to take a leading role in addressing food waste and food insecurity.

## BELGIUM: Belgian Wholesale Markets Leading the Way in Food Donation Efforts, Combating Food Waste and Hunger

Belgian wholesale markets have taken significant strides in fighting food waste and alleviating hunger through their visionary food donation projects. One such project, DREAM (Distribution et Récupération d'Excédents Alimentaires à Mabru), is a shining example of how collaboration and sustainable practices can make a profound impact on society.

### **The DREAM Project:**

DREAM is a social project with multiple objectives, including food recovery, professional reintegration, waste reduction, and distribution through a delivery service. The project operates under sustainability principles, focusing on ecology, economy, and social welfare. By creating jobs and fostering a circular and solidarity-based economy, DREAM is a role model for the Brussels community.

DREAM's efforts are making a tangible difference in Brussels' fight against food insecurity and waste. Approximately 70 Brussels-based associations receive surplus food daily, totaling an impressive 55,000 kg of fruits and vegetables. These fresh produce items, initially destined for disposal, are now revalued and distributed to those in precarious situations.

DREAM's success stems from strong partnerships with key stakeholders. Mabru, a primary wholesale market, plays a crucial role by connecting merchants with DREAM and providing three refrigerated rooms for food storage. The Bourse aux dons, a collaborative platform, facilitates the transfer of food donations between parties. Additionally, the project receives support from the Brussels Institute for Environment Management (IBGE) and Suez Environnement-Sita for waste management.

The day begins at 5 am when DREAM team's collect surplus food from participating merchants. The assembled products are sorted, stored, and encoded on the "Bourse aux Dons" platform. Subsequently, orders are prepared and delivered to beneficiary associations from 8 AM to 1:30 PM. This seamless operation ensures the timely and efficient distribution of rescued food.

DREAM's impact extends to the associations receiving the donations and the suppliers contributing to the cause. Associations such as Les Restos du cœur, SAMU social, and La Croix Rouge de Belgique are among the beneficiaries, providing vital food assistance to those in need. Meanwhile, merchants from Mabru contribute 20% of the total donations collected by DREAM, highlighting the industry's commitment to social responsibility.

Through initiatives like DREAM, Belgian wholesale markets exemplify how a collective effort can combat food waste and address food insecurity. By fostering a sustainable and inclusive ecosystem that supports reintegration, minimizes waste, and ensures equitable food distribution, these markets are making a meaningful impact on the lives of thousands.

## POLAND: Polish Wholesale Markets Spearheading Food Donation Initiatives to Combat Food Waste

At a time when ecological awareness and sustainability are paramount, Polish markets are taking bold steps to address food waste and support vulnerable populations.

According to research conducted by the Programme of Rationalisation and Food Waste Reduction in Poland, an average of nearly 5 tons of food is discarded annually, with consumers and households generating a staggering 3 million tons. To counteract this alarming trend, the Polish government implemented a regulation based on the Act on Food Waste Prevention in July 2019. The act aims to reduce food waste discarded by food traders, mainly targeting food past its best-before date or date of minimum durability and food with visual defects, including packaging.

Poland's largest wholesale market, Warszawski Rolno-Spożywczy Rynek Hurtowy S.A., has taken a proactive approach to inform tenants of commercial spaces about these regulations.

The market does not remain indifferent to the food waste issue, actively promoting a healthy diet and the importance of reducing waste. They encourage conscious shopping, proper food storage, rational portion sizes, and food education among children—moreover, the market advocates for waste segregation and freezing food in vacuum containers.

One remarkable collaboration involves nearly 15 years of partnership with the charitable organization Food Bank SOS. Together, they organize regular food collections, gathering around 10 tons during pre-Christmas collections. The donated food is then distributed to aid facilities such as orphanages, shelters, and community centers, benefiting homeless individuals, large families, and people with disabilities. The Food Bank SOS has supported nearly 1.5 million people in difficult situations over the past three years.

Warszawski Rolno-Spożywczy Rynek Hurtowy S.A. offers free access to the market for specialized charitable institutions and free storage of collected products in their warehouses. Other exemplary projects in Poland, like KOWR's food aid and ARiMR's support for food redistribution for social purposes, further contribute to the fight against food waste.

## Portugal, SIMAB and Banco Alimentar Contra a Fome

Since its creation, the four markets of the SIMAB group (MARB, MARL, MARÉ and MARF) have collaborated with the Banco Alimentar Contra a Fome (BACF) in Portugal, through a collaboration protocol signed with this institution, contributing to the baskets, delivered to needy and vulnerable families, are nutritionally enriched, as well as supporting the fight against food waste.

Among the actions undertaken, the following stand out:

- Provision of facilities (refrigerated space) so that BACF can carry out daily collections of surplus fresh fruit and vegetable products from operators which, despite not being able to be sold, can be consumed under guaranteed hygiene and food safety conditions; and,
- Support in carrying out campaigns in Wholesale Markets.

Over the past three years, the collection data is as follows: In 2020, a total of 2,103 tons were collected. This figure increased to 2,317 tons in 2021 and, in 2022, the collection decreased to 1,348 tons.